THE

RECONSTRUCTIONIST

DEDICATED TO THE ADVANCEMENT OF JUDAISM AS A RELIGIOUS CIVILIZATION, TO THE UPBUILDING OF ISRAEL'S ANCIENT HOMELAND, AND TO THE FURTHERANCE OF UNIVERSAL FREEDOM, JUSTICE AND PEACE.

Vol. IV. July 1, 1938 Tammuz 2, 5698 No. 10

Editorials

THE RECONSTRUCTIONIST SUMMER INSTITUTE

THE NEW MERGER

The Sex Morals of Modern Youth

By ROBERT GORDIS

The Jewish School

By SAMUEL DININ

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EDITORIALS

The Reconstructionist Summer Institute

WITH this issue THE RECONSTRUCTIONIST suspends publication for the months of July and August to resume again in September. We believe that, during the publication season which draws to a close with this issue, our paper has consistently maintained its position as the spokesman of that outlook on Jewish life which regards Judaism as a religious civilization and aims at reconstructing Jewish life in a way that would enable Jewish civilization to flourish on a high ethical and spiritual level. To what extent we have succeeded in our purpose our readers can judge better than we. Many letters of commendation received from them have been very encouraging.

But even if our paper be all that we should like to believe that it is, we cannot be content with our achievement in view of the chaos and confusion that still dominate Jewish life and Jewish thought. The Reconstructionist movement is bigger than THE RECONSTRUCTIONIST. What is the future of this movement to be? How can it make its influence felt? The publication of THE RECONSTRUCTIONIST is one way, to be sure, but is it the only way? Are not other channels for influencing public opinion in the direction of a more integrated, more creative and more spiritual Jewish life waiting to be opened by us? We feel that we have done not a little to awaken in the minds of earnest and intelligent Jews the demand for a reinterpretation of Jewish tradition and a reconstruction of Jewish society that shall take cognizance of modern needs. But it is one thing to know that Jewish life needs to be rebuilt and another to know how to rebuild it and to mobilize the resources for its rebuilding. Our own adherents have begun to tell us: Your philosophy is good, but what are you going to do about it?

We have certain tentative plans for an expansion of our activities which we feel should be of help in widening the sphere of our influence and translating some of our ideals into action. Not that we propose to organize any new party in Israel. We want to continue functioning as a school of thought and utilize existing institutions as the organs for action. But even a school of thought needs organization. If we are not content with merely marking time, we must see to it that facilities exist for making our influence felt in every walk of Jewish life. This is not the place to discuss concrete plans, but we are anxious to discuss them with a wider circle of interested individuals than our own Editorial Board. That is one of our main reasons for convening our Reconstructionist Summer Institute which is to meet at the Cejwin Camps, Port Jervis,

N. Y., over the Labor Day Week End, September 2nd to 5th.

The program of the Institute is designed to serve a two-fold purpose: (1) it is to help clarify the ideology of our movement on some important points that need clarification and (2) it is to help us decide on ways and means for influencing Jewish life toward the fulfilment of our ideals. Among the knotty problems on which we shall seek counsel are: What is the place that religion should occupy in Jewish life and how can it best be made to fill that place? How can the religious character of our Jewish civilization be maintained without detriment to the secular interests of Jewry, and how can these secular interests be advanced without impairing the religious character of the Jewish civilization? Another question on which light will be sought will be the whole problem of Jewish community organization. How can the will to an organized community life overcome the hurdles put in its path by ideological and class division and by narrow institutional loyalties that oppose every suggestion of communal supervision or control. But, in addition to these ideological problems, we want to take counsel on ways and means for making our influence effective in Jewish life. Should we engage in other publication than that of our periodical? Should we publish pamphlets, books, aids to study and religious devotion? How can we influence the home, the synagogue, the school, social service institutions, Zionism, the Jewish labor movement, etc.?

We are confident that our Institute will be of great help in answering at least some of these questions. A group of Reconstructionists from all over the country, living together for a few days in the quiet retreat afforded by the Cejwin Camps, exchanging not only ideas, but the subtler influences that accompany social intercourse, the emotional overtones of personal communion, can effect much for our cause. The idea of publishing The Reconstructionist was itself a by-product of a similar meeting at the same place called together by Dr. Kaplan in the summer of 1934. What new project will emerge from our new Summer Institute remains to be seen. At any rate we hope that our readers will give earnest consideration to our invitation to attend the Reconstructionist Summer Institute. We have talked to them through these columns throughout the year. Now we should like to meet them face to face and to converse *with* them rather than talk *to* them. *Lehitraot!*

The New Merger

THE American Jewish Congress, the American Jewish Committee, B'nai B'rith and the Jewish Labor Committee have ratified an agreement, made by their respective representatives, to coordinate and integrate all activities dealing with the defense of Jewish rights in this country. Called together by Mr. Edgar Kaufman of Pittsburgh, Pa., the various committees paved the way for the welcome peace which followed the stormy controversy centering around the American Jewish Congress elections and referendum.

The Reconstructionist may, without undue boastfulness, lay claim to having contributed somewhat to the tentative solution. In the columns of this journal, appeals have been repeatedly made for action along the lines taken. But the edtiors, as usual, are not completely satisfied. Unity on the front of self-defense constitutes the sort of unity achieved by nations during war times. The stress of outward pressure has resulted in an emergency measure. American Jewry has still to reconstruct its internal organization on a permanent basis. A peace time structure remains to be erected.

Though we are dissatisfied, however, the Pittsburgh agreement renders us more sanguine about the possibilities of reconstructing Jewish life. In the first place, it demonstrates that the present Jewish leadership can be made responsive to an

alert and awakened Jewish public opinion. The opposition to the Congress referendum and elections expressed by the other national organizations might have yielded no results at all, if the masses of Jews had not openly expressed themselves. When the Detroit Community Council passed a resolution demanding unity, and urged all the other Community Councils in the United States to do likewise; when Mr. Kaufman circulated the affiliates of the Jewish Welfare Board with an appeal to them to petition the four organizations involved in the controversy—then we saw action. If the Jews of America could only come to realize that Jewish life is *their* life, and not the private hobby of a limited number of leaders, the situation would be very different.

Secondly, the whole controversy proved that American Jews are indifferent to Jewish life—when they *are* indifferent—not from any malicious perversity. When an issue arises which affects them directly, they realize their implication in it, and they are prepared to deal with it in an intelligent fashion. This fact points to two other truths: (a) that the myth of the native Jewish inability to cooperate is false, and (b) that if Jewish life can be rendered interesting and worthwhile, the problem of indifference will wither away. If religion, education, Zionism, Jewish culture can be made as vital to American Jews as self-defense, these will command the interest and respect which the fight against anti-Semitism now commands.

In the third place, we are inclined to optimism in view of the fact that the representatives of the various organizations will now come to know one another. We venture to predict that they will discover, through their new contacts, that they have many things in common besides the need for common defense. They will discover that their erstwhile opponents are not ogres; that beneath the surface of organizational differences and conflicting slogans, they share a common life and a common lot. Call it community, nation, religion, race—the Jews constitute a *group* with a vast common denominator. When Jews come to know one another better, they will hesitate long before resroting to the acrimonious debate and mud slinging which characterized the controversy just ended.

In the meantime, the best of success to the new merger. May it lead to fruitful action!

The Sex Morals of Modern Youth

By Robert Gordis*

THE story of Adam and Eve testifies to the fact that the two basic motivations for human conduct have always been those associated with food and sex. Yet, though these motivations are equally fundamental, their expression in human life has been very different. Food has always remained on the physical level, uncomplicated by other considerations. Sex, on the other hand, has had a much more checkered career, because it is interwoven everywhere with spiritual elements. The most obvious form in which sex expresses itself is the relationship between men and women, parents and children. Moreover, as psycho-analytic research has demonstrated, the sexual impulse in sublimated form is the source of all creativity in literature, music and the arts. It has been the driving force behind all forms of human ambition and achievement. The dominant role of sex is likewise illustrated by the debit side of the ledger, the incidence of marital infidelity, commercial vice, obscenity, and the social diseases.

The different ways in which various civilizations have attempted to cope with

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this primal source of human energy have been duly recorded in such works as Westermarck's "History of Human Marriage" and Crawley's "Mystic Rose." But the most important adjustment of the sexual impulse to modern society is that evolved by Judaism, which became part of the Christian tradition, and is basic to Western civilization.

During the great creative periods of Jewish life, sex was looked upon as a normal human attribute, possessing the capacity for both good and evil. Sexual matters are discussed in the Bible and the Talmud with the utmost freedom and without the slightest suggestion of obscenity. The Jewish attitude is summed up perfectly in the naive incident reported in the Talmud of the student who sought to observe the private habits of his revered teacher. When reproached for prying, he answered simply, "This too is Torah, part of the way of life, that I need to learn." This approach, which looked upon sex as a private, but nonetheless sacred manifestation of human personality, created the traditional Jewish sex code, which inculcated continence before marriage and loyalty within the marriage bond afterwards. In Judaism, the spirit and the law were part of one indivisible whole.

When Christianity was born, it took over the sex code of Judaism, but failed to accept its sex attitude. St. Paul, the founder of Christianity, looked upon sex as an unworthy instinct, and made its suppression the highest human ideal. Since, unfortunately, not all men and women were capable of renouncing the sexual impulse, marriage was instituted, and even glorified as a sacrament. Thus emerged the contradictory attitude, which has persisted to the present day, that marriage is sacred, but sex is sinful.

That millions of men and women have lived by this attitude and remained clean-minded and happy, is a tribute to the essential decency of human nature and the practical idealism of the Jewish sex ethic. Naturally there have been countless rebels against this code of pre-marital continence and monogamous marriage. Nevertheless, no alternative, whether it be "free love," promiscuity, or companionate marriage,has worked anywhere as well in giving the sex impulse adequate expression in the life of the individual and yet harnessing its energies for the building of society.

In our own day, the might of a great state was hurled in vain against the traditional sex code. In the early days of Soviet Russia, all the resources of propaganda were used to scrap the traditional family code, which was so closely interwoven with religion. Yet two decades of experience have created a reaction of revolutionary dimensions. Today the official Soviet attitude on marriage and the family may be fairly described as puritanical, in its rigorous acceptance of nearly all the elements of the Judeo-Christian ethic, without, of course, acknowledging its indebtedness.

It is in Western Europe and America, where the code is officially recognized, that students of society have discerned a widespread weakening of traditional morality in practice, especially since the World War. That catastrophe broke down all the inhibitions of civilization. Under the stress of fear, life took on the character of a last desperate orgy. "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die" became the motto of the age, in which restraints and ideals were thrown to the winds. With the post-war prosperity, what had previously been an act of desperation became a symbol of smartness. Excessive drinking and sexual license were the marks of sophistication. Students in high school "knew everything"; by the time they reached college they were blasé and enervated. The innocence of childhood seemed a thing of the past. Almost as soon as people were conscious, they were sex-conscious. It was the age of flaming youth.

These new attitudes of the younger generation aroused violent controversy among the elders. While the conservatives were shocked by the new freedom, the liberals claimed that modern youth was not as scarlet as it was painted; it was

merely more honest, more straightforward than its predecessors.

All this argument however was based on hearsay and fragmentary impression, with no real attempt to discover what the practice of modern youth actually was. That effort was made only recently by Dorothy Dunbar Bromley and Florence Haxton Britten who submitted detailed questionnaires to be answered anonymously by students in 46 colleges and universities. Specifically, the students were asked to state whether they had experienced extra-marital sexual intercourse, and what were the motives that impelled them. The replies which were received from six hundred and eighteen girls and four hundred and seventy men were then tabulated according to religious background, the economic status of the parents, and the parental attitude toward sexual freedom.

On the basis of the tabulation published thus far by Mrs. Bromley and Mrs. Britten (Redbook Magazine, May 1937)* several very interesting facts emerge. First and foremost, it becomes clear that the traditional patterns of sex behavior still survive, though far from universally. Since we have no comparative data for past periods, we cannot tell what the trend has been in recent years. Of the girls only 28 per cent had "gone the limit," while 74 had remained virgin. Sexual continence among the boys was lower; approximately 52 per cent had full sex experience. The reasons for this are not far to seek. The double standard of morality still persists strongly, according to which "chastity" is conceived of as essential to women only, while sexual license among men is condoned or overlooked. Similarly, the opportunities offered by commercial vice operate in the same direction, while there is no fear of physical consequence to act as a deterrent as in the case of women.

When the girls were asked to give their motives for abstaining from sexual relations, the three main reasons advanced, which accounted for 64 per cent of all the replies, were fear of pragnancy, moral and religious scruples and fear or consideration of parents.

The Jewish people has always been noted for its high standards of family purity. How do the Jewish boys and girls of our generation appear in this survey? Here the results are disquieting, but that is all the more reason for being concerned with the situation. On the basis of the figures published thus far, there is little evidence that Jewish ideals of personal purity are widely practiced among the youth. On the contrary, Jewish boys, with a percentage of 26 per cent for continence, rank lower than the Catholics and the Protestants, whose figures is 42 per cent. Even the Jewish girls with a rate of 67 per cent stand lower than their Protestant and their Catholic sisters, who rate 78 and 81 per cent respectively.

So much for the facts, admittedly partial though they be. What conclusions may be drawn from them? The majority of American boys and girls still adhere to the traditional moral code, but the minority is now one of considerable proportions. Two generations ago, it required strength of will to break with accepted moral standards; today, our youth are faced not only by desires that refuse to be suppressed, but by infinitely greater facilities for sexual experience. The roadhouse, the automobile, the week-end party, offer opportunities for sexual contact undreamt of fifty years ago. Moreover a considerable body of influential opinion, favors, at least by implication, a "revised" and "broader" sex ethic. If, as we believe, the Jewish code of sex continence before marriage and loyalty to the marriage vow still remains the best adjustment of the sexual impulse to society, the problem of the maintenance of this code dare no longer be disregarded from false notions of modesty. Specific methods for dealing with the problems raised by the survey must be sought and applied.

There is a great need for intensified

*Since this article by Dr. Gordis was written and submitted for publication, a book by the same authors has appeared based on more extensive data leading to the same general conclusions.—Eds.

moral and religious training, that would emphasize the ideal of sexual continence as the prelude to a happy marriage. It is noteworthy that, according to the survey, religious and moral considerations bulked almost as large as the fear of physical conesquences in enforcing standards of sexual purity.

The importance of religious and moral training is attested on the negative side, by the disappointingly low standards among the Jewish group. No other group in America has undergone so rapid a transformation in background, economic status and religious life. The changes have proved well-nigh disastrous to the two most important institutions for character building, the home and religious school. It is a matter of common knowledge that a wide gap exists between the generations in the Jewish home, a chasm which has robbed the elders of most of their moral authority, especially as far as "modern," "educated" children are concerned. No less evident is the low estate of Jewish education in America, which is without parallel among other denominations. It is reliably estimated that only 26 per cent of all Jewish children receive any kind of religious training. Of this, a good deal is of brief duration and inferior quality. Without attempting to argue for a correlation, it is curious to note that this figure is the same as that for continence among the Jewish boys in the survey. The widespread apathy toward Jewish education in America is undermining not only the cultural distinctiveness of American Jewry, but its physical vitality and moral stamina as well. These figures stress all too vividly the necessity for strengthening Jewish educational effort, especially among adolescents and post-adolescents, who have been largely neglected. The survey gives one a new insight into the importance of the B'nai B'rith Hillel Foundation and all agencies seeking to further the moral and religious idealism of the college youth.

What form shall this moral and religious training take? It becomes abundantly clear that it must rest not on fear and ignorance but on rational grounds. The elements of the traditional sex ethic can and must be taught in the open, on their merits. The fear of pregnancy cannot be depended upon as an effective deterrent, especially in view of the spread of information on contraception. Capital punishment does not decrease murder, and poison liquor did not appreciably reduce drinking in the Volstead Era.

At all events, that morality which is based on the fear of being caught scarcely deserves the name. This is well illustrated in the present inquiry. Of all the religious groups in America, the Ethical Culture movement has always been noted for giving its children a detailed and rational sex education. It is noteworthy that Ethical Culture students rank incomparably higher than any other group in the survey. The figure of continence for Ethical Culture boys (80 per cent) and for the girls (85) per cent), contrasting with the general figures of 40 per cent and 76 per cent respectively, indicates that knowledge and not fear is the foundation of morality. Our elementary and high schools, and our religious schools as well, would do well to break down the Chinese Wall of silence, and make sex education an integral part of the curriculum. A valuable attempt in this direction was made by Rabbi Eugene Kohn in his excellent paper, "Religious Sanctions for the Sex-Guidance of Modern Jewish Youth" (THE RECONSTRUCTIONIST, Vol. 1, Nos. 15, 16, November 29 and December 13, 1935.)

One other conclusion may safely be drawn from these figures. Modern parents frequently assert that they do not believe in the strict regulation of their children's hours, companions and habits, because severity would drive their children to hypocrisy and dishonesty. Undoubtedly there is an element of truth in this viewpoint, but only to a degree. The survey disclosed that, irrespective of all other factors, the parents who were described as "watchful" or "strict" could count on a somewhat greater adherence to moral standards by their children than the "liberal" or "tolerant" variety.

There is, however, one more element in the situation of fundamental importance that must not be overlooked. The greatest obstacle to a rational sex ethic for our youth today lies in the dislocations of our economic system, which denies the opportunity of early marriage to hundreds of thousands of young people. In countless replies to the questionnaire, young men and women stated that they had entered into pre-marital sexual experience, not in a mood of light-mindedness, but with a deep awareness of the dangers involved, driven by natural instincts that could be suppressed no longer. Our modern age, still retaining its attitude of furtiveness toward sex, hypocritically closes its eyes to this problem, which the depression has intensified beyond the breaking point for an entire generation. When young people who are in love with one another cannot afford to marry and see no likelihood of marriage even in the future, moral and religious standards will generally be unable to stem the tide. It is usually forgotten that the accepted sex code of continence and monogamy is based upon the possibility of early marriage. What our age is too genteel to express, the Rabbis of the Talmud put with characteristic frankness when they said, "If a man reaches twenty years of age and does not marry, all his days are spent in sin, or in the thought of sin." They were, of course, speaking of conditions in the semi-tropical Orient, where sexual maturity is reached much earlier than in our northern climate. They were fully aware, too, of countless exceptions to this general rule, but they held fast to its essential truth.

If we shut the door to marriage for our youth, we are inviting sexual promiscuity, prostitution and perversion. One of the great ethical advantages of birth control is that it permits young couples to be married, before they can afford to raise a family. Information on contraception, however, cannot meet the needs of thousands of young men and women who cannot afford the economic burden of marriage, even without the early birth of children. Some form of subvention must be created to facilitate the marriage of young people. It might take the form of a system of insurance, payments on which would begin at the birth of the child and extend until he was ready for marriage. Perhaps a more feasible plan, under present economic conditions, would be a government stipend to young married couples. In spite of its undoubted cost, such a system of stipends would be far cheaper than the present burden of disease, vice and personal maladjustment borne by the nation. Such a plan must be sharply distinguished from proposals to subvent large families, in vogue in fascist lands. The purpose of the economic assistance here suggested would be not to stimulate the production of cannon-fodder for the next war, but to normalize the lives of hundreds of thousands of young people. That it would, however, serve to counteract the falling birthrate in America would surely not be the least of its advantages.

Modern American youth can well meet comparison with its predecessors here or elsewhere. It is, however, its destiny to live in an age of uncertainty and doubt, and it is troubled by unprecedented physical and spiritual problems. Our young men and women are determined to utilize their freedom in order to achieve personal happiness. It has always been the prerogative of youth to seek its objectives without stopping to count too closely the ultimate cost, either to itself or to the society of which it is a part.

To reestablish high ideals of personal morality among the youth a broad program of moral education is required. In order that these ideals may be translated into action, it is essential to improve our social system so as to eliminate its grossest inequalities, and thus give to all the opportunity for self-fulfillment on the highest and most satisfying level. Only through this dual program of moral education and social righteousness can we hope to restore the sexual impulse to its rightful place in human life as a source of happiness, a means to immortality and an incentive to achievement.

The Jewish School

By Samuel Dinin

JEWISH education receives scant attention in general educational literature. A book like Monroe's "Text-book in the History of Education" devotes 160 out of 760 pages to Greek and Roman education, 33 to Chinese education, but not one line to ancient or modern Jewish education. Other educational historians devote a few pages to Jewish education; but it is treated either as preliminary to the study of early Christian education or as an aspect of Greek education, without any originality of its own. But as sad as is the neglect in general educational literature of the classical period in Jewish education, the almost equal neglect of the subject by Jewish scholars and in Jewish educational literature, is even more deplorable.

The appearance of "The Jewish School,"* which is a history of Jewish education from the earliest times to the year 500 of the present era, is thus welcome indeed. It is not only the first substantial history of Jewish education in the classical period; it is a thoroughgoing study as well, which corrects any number of false impressions conveyed in discussions of the subject in general educational literature. Mr. Morris demonstrates convincingly the unique role of Jewish education in the preservation and advancement of the collective life of the Jewish people and the unique relation of Jewish education to general educational theory and practice. Though the book is short in comparison with other histories of education—it contains a little over 240 pages—it should be mentioned by way of sole criticism that there is considerable padding. There simply is not enough material on the subject for a lengthy treatise.

It would be gratuitous and should be unnecessary to give even a brief summary of "The Jewish School," as excellent as it is. It may be instructive, however, if a few running comments are made, in the light of our present theory and practice in Jewish education, on several problems discussed in the book.

I

Mr. Morris points out that the development of Jewish popular education was marked by three definite stages: the rise of the Synagogue during, or soon after, the Babylonian captivity; the establishment of schools for youths in the period following the Maccabean wars; and the foundation of the public elementary school after the destruction of the second temple by the Romans and the downfall of the political state. He asks us to notice that in each case "an external political event served as a stimulus to accelerate the process of inner development." A people living a normal placid life on its own soil makes no educational innovations. There is no challenge and no combat. Culture and education stagnate; they assume static and fixed forms. But every crisis in Jewish life, every threat to Jewish survival makes necessary a new adjustment, the forging of new weapons for the battle against extinction. And in this battle education not only leads the way; it itself becomes the instrument and way of survival.

In our own day the phenomenon is no less true. The Balfour declaration and the emergence of a Hebrew Palestine, profoundly affected Jewish education. The emergence of Hitler and the resurgence of anti-Semitism are beginning to affect Jewish education. The new interest in adult Jewish education is in large measure due to these external occurrences. On the one hand, Jewish education is being used and must be used as the way to the self-redemption of the Jewish people, as the instrument of the return of the Jewish people to itself and

* The Jewish School, by Nathan Morris, Eyre and Spottiswood, London, 1937.

of its rededication to its own life and values. On the other hand, Jewish education must itself become transformed. We must devise a new type of education to meet the present crisis in Jewish life. That there should be a new interest in Jewish education today should occasion no surprise. But that the growth of Jewish education is not commensurate with the need or the crisis should be a warning to us, for this indicates either that Jewish education has not invented a procedure, a method, a philosophy adequate to the task at hand, or that the will of the Jewish people, to find a way of survival, has weakened. Jewish education today as always must point out the way to the return of the Jewish people to itself, and find a method of education which will succeed and be satisfying.

II

Contrary to general belief, popular Jewish education began with the teaching of adults, "gradually extending downwards until, after six or seven hundred years, it reached the child. But once fully established it continued along essentially the same lines, without a break, down to the eighteenth century." Until the last few years, Jewish education, like all education, has been so "child-centered," and so little "adult-centered," that we have forgotten that, in classical times, the position was reversed. Adult education is just beginning to come into its own. The past generation had little use for the middle-aged and the old. It believed with Bernard Shaw that those who reached the age of forty-five are useless and should be discarded or shot. But the experiments of Thorndike and others in adult learning have demonstrated that there is little diminution in the ability of the old to learn, that the worst that can be said of old age in this connection is that then the learning process is slowed down. The learning powers, however, do not atrophy; they remain strong almost until the end.

The last decade has demonstrated the need for adult education on a larger scale than ever before. Those who wish to reconstruct the social order have begun to realize that it cannot be done with little children, that we cannot wait until a new generation is educated along new lines. By the time the present generation of children grows up, there may be new needs, a new world. Reconstruction of the social order demands reeducation now of everybody, young and old, all along the line. The depression gave an unwanted leisure to millions, and technology a much needed leisure to many more millions. With time on their hands, with a great need driving them, with hope and faith in their ability to learn revived by the Thorndikes, it is no wonder that adults have taken to education as never before. The need for adult Jewish education is even greater. Note that the past great crisis in Jewish life—the exile, created the first type of popular Jewish education, and that this education was for adults. Today we are facing a similar crisis. We must start the old cycle all over again. We must once again begin with adults.

III

Mr. Morris contends that the rise of the Jewish school for youths owed something to Hellenistic influence, to which it was partly intended as an antidote. He demonstrates further that there were striking similarities, which are not mere coincidences, between the schools of Athens and of Palestine. Mr. Morris quotes the following passage from Dr. Boyd's "History of Western Education": "There is a curious irony in the fact that the Jews, in seeking to save themselves from being overborne by the Greek culture, should have adopted the Hellenic institution of the school for their children and the Hellenic practice of disputation for their young men. It is a striking testimony to the tremendous power of that culture that the one Oriental people who succeeded in freeing themselves from its influence did so by making use of its educational methods."

Mr. Morris agrees with the spirit of the statement, though not with all the facts. He shows that long before the Hellenistic period all the conditions necessary for the rise of popular education were already in existence in Palestine. Nevertheless he feels that there *were* Hellenistic influences, and that most historians overlook them. The father's responsibility for the instruction of his children; the general organization of the school; the fact that no woman was allowed to teach; the fact that anyone who considered himself qualified to do so could set up a school;—these and many other facts were as true of education in Athens as in Jerusalem. Words like "bench," and the method of pilpul were borrowed from the Greeks. It was only after a long while that the Jewish community exercised some control over the content of education. But in the earlier period it was left almost entirely to the father. And although the extreme attitude as evidenced in the words of Socrates to Alcibiades: "No one, so to speak, cares a straw how you are taught or how any other Athenian is taught," was never true of the Jewish attitude, still the differences in the early period were, as Morris points out, only of degree.

Modern Jewish educators in this country are often accused of aping American education. The very adoption or adaptation of American educational methods is looked upon as heresy, as measures which are bound to lead to assimilation, if they are not already an indication of the extent to which these educators have become assimilated. Mr. Morris's demonstration of the interrelation of Hellenic and Jewish education should serve to dispel these notions. The American Jewish educators are proceeding in a very traditional manner. There is no reason why we, like our ancestors, should not be able to use the educational methods of the land in which we live to free us from its undue influence and to render ourselves safe from assimilation. Even the Hebrew University in Palestine has had to come to America for its educators. Because America is in the educational forefront, we should learn all we can from American education as to organization, methodology, principles of text-book writing, psychology of learning and the like, as long as we use this knowledge for our own ends. It is an excellent example of what Ahad Haam called competitive imitation as against the imitation leading to self-effacement.

In discussing the relation of Greek to Jewish education, Mr. Morris throws light on the question of secular subjects in the Jewish school. He contends that, before the fall of the state, it was customary, especially among the upper classes, to teach children the Greek language and literature and possibly other non-religious subjects. This teaching was done by non-Jewish teachers. The hatreds engendered by the disastrous Roman war created wide hostility to Greek wisdom and it was put under ban. The study of the Torah became the only outlet for the people's religious, social, and cultural life. Education became exclusive in character, and all Roman and Greek and other influences were eliminated.

During the early years of the Emancipation, the Jews were derided by the Western powers for their lack of enlightenment and for their general backwardness as far as European culture was concerned. But as history proves in the case of the Greco-Roman world, it is the non-Jewish masters who rule over Israel, who are responsible for the narrowing of the cultural and educational interests of the Jewish people. When Jews and Greeks lived together in toleration, they learned to respect and understand each other. There was a healthy competitiveness which quickened and energized Jewish life, infused it with new spirit, broadened its outlook and interests. But when the Greeks decided to be all-inclusive and totalitarian, to permit no cultural divergences, or when the Romans hampered and restricted the ordinary processes of Jewish life and made normal political as well as cultural life tense and difficult, the Jews

were driven back to the Torah and to themselves for their preservation and salvation. If peoples are not permitted to live in peace and toleration, there can be no imitativeness, no understanding, no interacting process of learning and adaptation. The scope and extent of the Jewish education of a period thus become criteria of the cultural advancement, of the liberalism and toleration of the people among whom the Jews dwell. In Spain the education of the Jewish child included far more than the study of the Torah; it included secular subjects as well. The Jewish education of the ghetto child was narrow indeed in comparison with that of the child of the Spanish Golden Age. Many of the post-emancipation schools went to the other extreme—they gave little time to traditional Jewish subjects, and secular subjects replaced them. Such a policy can only lead to complete assimilation and extinction. The separation of Jewish education and secular education in Western countries creates an altogether different problem for modern Jews. It is Jewish education and not secular education which is on the defensive. In Germany, however, the triumph of Nazism has led to a return to the Synagogue on the part of the German Jews, and to a rebirth of Jewish education. The secular studies may again become constricted as in similar periods in the past.

But even within Jewish education, there is the clash between the traditional and the modern approach to subject matter. The traditionalists frown on such educational frills as arts and crafts and music and current events and celebrations. They would have us return to the old way and have children study the Talmud and the Bible as they were studied during our long Diaspora existence. And in our own day the triumph of the one or the other will reflect the attitude of the non-Jewish world to Jewish life and culture. If the Jews in America are given freedom to develop their own lives, they will develop a school which will synthesize the best in the American and Jewish cultures. If at any time the Jews will be restrained from pursuing their own way, or if assimilation threatens by virtue of other causes, there will be a narrowing of the curriculum of the Jewish school, and Torah, in its narrow sense, will become the chief if not the only subject of study.

IV

It has been already noted that in the classical period the education of the children, which meant, in almost all cases, exclusively that of the sons, was the responsibility of the father. Today the role of the sexes in education is almost reversed. Girls are now almost on a plane of equality with the boys, and in the upper grades of many schools and high schools, even outnumber the boys. And it is women who are making themselves increasingly and often solely responsible for the education of our children. In fact, it can be truthfully said that, if it were not for our grandmothers, Jewish education would be in a sorry plight indeed. In many ways the new role of the Jewish woman is hopeful and promising, and no one suggests turning the clock back and restoring women and girls to their subordinate positions in Jewish life. But it is not only Jewish education, but general education, too, which decries the neglect of the education of the children by the fathers of the community. In parent and nursery education, increasing importance is being attached to the cooperation of the father not only in the education of the child, but in the entire upbringing of the child. It has been suggested that fathers help bathe the little tots, and make themselves responsible for a number of concrete tasks daily, which have to do with the training of their children. Some go even as far as suggesting that fathers ought to bake and do housecleaning, not so much to be able to relieve mothers occasionally at these tasks, but to gain a better appreciation of the profession of housewife and mother.

We need not go as far as some parent educators would have us go, but it cer-

tainly would be a loss for Jewish life and for Jewish education, if the fathers left the Jewish education of their children and of the children of the community to the mothers alone. In traditional Jewish life, the father's role in the education of his child was highly important. He was constantly interested in the child's education. He gave him supplementary education, fixed weekly reviews and examinations, and in every way indicated his own concern and interest in the education of his child. If Jewish fathers show no interest in their own Jewish education, and still less in the Jewish education of their children, what attitude other than cynical indifference can we expect from our children?

V

In the early periods, the school was independent of the Synagogue; elementary education was treated as a private venture. After the destruction of the Temple, and later in the Babylonian communities, the school became an integral part of the synagogue and some public control was introduced. This public control over the school, however, carried with it no responsibility for its maintenance, and the teacher was still dependent for his livelihood on the fees paid by the pupils. The only complete control of Jewish education was achieved in Poland under Kahal rule. With the break-down of Kahal autonomy, Jewish education reverted in large measure to its status as a private venture. Such reversion brings with it confusion and chaos.

The outstanding achievement of American Jewish education during the past twenty-five years is its professionalization and its organization on a communal basis. As great as the progress has been, however, in this direction, Jewish education is still to a large extent under control of individual teachers or of individual schools or congregation. When Jewish life is secure and well-established, decentralization in governmental functions as well as in education is understandable. But when government or education become private ventures, it is a sign either of a utopian anarchy or of extreme chaos and disintegration. Jewish life in this country will be strong, powerful, and creative if Jewish education is organized and effective and ministers to the needs of the Jewish people.

VI

In both the Bible and the Talmud there is a recurrence of the statement that the age of three is a proper starting point for a practical religious training as well as for the beginning of a literary education. It is the father, however, who usually is spoken of as the teacher for children of this age. When schools were opened, children were enrolled at the age of five or six and often at seven. The early starting age continued in force practically to our own day. In America we are all familiar with the transformation which is taking place in the age of entrance. Very few children enter our schools at the age of six. The average age of children entering our Hebrew schools seems to become higher with each new survey so that today it is nearer nine and ten than six or seven. This is an alarming trend. We have already cut off three or four years from the child's educational career, and every year the time of entrance is deferred further.

It is encouraging, therefore, to learn that Ivriah is planning to open all-day preschool classes for children, aiming to integrate a general and a Jewish education, and that it intends to start with *three-year-olds*. To be sure it is the spread of nursery schools and not Jewish tradition which has inspired this experiment, but whatever the motive, the expriment is a welcome one. We hope it will start a new fashion which will reverse the trend of present day admissions to Jewish schools.

VII

Among the Jews, as well as among the Greeks, economics was the determining factor in deciding when a child's education should begin. "The sons of rich

parents in Athens," Morris tell us, "went to school earliest; their poorer fellow-citizens went later. Again, the poor could not keep their sons at school for as long a time as they needed their services at home, and the fees were a burden, so they sent them only when they were old enough to pick up instruction quickly, whilst the rich, to whom money was no object, sent their sons to school at an age when they could do little more than look on while their elders worked. It should be added that among the Jews of Talmudic times, as probably also amongst the Greeks, there were some who failed to send their children to school altogether, either for lack of facilities or on account of the 'burden' of the fees."

Although the poor are as handicapped today as they were in Talmudic times, the situation has become reversed. It is the poor who send their children to all-day Jewish schools, and at an early age, and the rich who postpone the education of their children until the Bar-Mitzvah period. The community must make it possible to ease the burden of the poor and pay for the Jewish education of their children. At the same time, it would be a good thing for the rich to revert to ancient Jewish tradition and send their children to Jewish schools at an early age. Otherwise we shall be evolving a peculiar class society—with the rich in control of Jewish life but ignorant of Jewish culture and values, and the poor given a free Jewish education by the rich and thus becoming the culturally elect among their people.

Jewish education in classic times was largely conditioned by the lack of textbooks. Numerous passages in the Talmud bear eloquent testimony to the costliness and scarcity of books. We tend to overlook the factor of textbooks in present-day Jewish education, and fail to see the role economics plays in the choice of textbooks for the Jewish school. Now it is universally accepted that the Department of Synagogue and School Extension of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations has put out, as a whole, the handsomest and the most attractive textbooks for the teaching of history and Bible. But its books are usually priced so high, that they are out of the reach of a great number of Jewish children. The popularity of Reshit Daat is not so much a tribute to its educational excellence as to its cheapness. It is strange that in a democratic society Jewish children should be deprived of the best textbooks available because they are too poor to buy them. Here is one more field in which community responsibility is in order. It is not enough to pay for the tuition of the poor. We should provide them with the books as well. Otherwise we are guilty of not giving our children the best Jewish education possible, but the best Jewish education they can afford.

VIII

During the classical period as well as during the long Diaspora period, the effectiveness of the Jewish education of the child was due to the fact that there was perfect correspondence between the home, the community, and the school. From birth the child grew up in an intense religious atmosphere which pervaded the home no less than the synagogue and the school. Religion was not confined to certain hours and to certain places as it is being confined today. No special lessons were devoted to the teaching of religion, because religion was coextensive with life and controlled every action of man. The child really learned from doing, from life itself. For there is hardly a Jewish festival in which there is no special part reserved for the child.

It should not be necessary to point out that if Jewish education in America is ineffective, its ineffectiveness is due to the fact that the home is no longer a center of Jewish life, that the activities of the school and the home are no longer correlated. It may not be possible, even if it were desirable, to restore the old home and the traditional Jewish education. But whatever Jewish education is given to our

children, must be believed in by the parents and *lived* in the home. Otherwise Jewish education becomes a lie and a hypocrisy. If our Jewish education does not correspond to the Jewish life we wish to live, let us make over Jewish education in accordance with our beliefs and practices. But let us do away with the dualism existing between the home and the school.

IX

Because of the costliness and scarcity of books, the Jewish school of antiquity relied for the most part on memory. It was a case of endless repetition until recall was made instantaneous. No wonder the school day was so long. Every child had to await his turn. Memory, particularly of abstruse subject matter, is difficult and many hours of study with frequent review and repetition are necessary for retention.

A great deal of our teaching today is carried on as if there were still a scarcity of books. We emphasize too much oral drill, oral reading. The secular school has already shifted its emphasis from oral reading to silent reading, but we keep on teaching "mechanical" reading orally, and Hebrew and Biblical Literature orally. Oral teaching requires an overtaxing use of memory, and it is about time that we gave silent reading its proper emphasis. We should use our books, not ignore them, nor memorize them to a point of meaninglessness.

Of course, there is one respect in which we should return to the bookless system of the classical period. In modern education, we talk of learning by doing. In the old Jewish education, the doing was left to the home, and no books were used because there were none. It was a bookless system based on books which were not to be gotten, hence the content of the books had to be mastered orally. This is not the kind of bookless system we should resort to today. We should use as many books as necessary. But mastery of these books should not be an end in itself, but a means to the living of the "good Jewish life." The school should emphasize the *living of the good Jewish life,* and the books should be a means for learning about it.

X

The temptation is great to continue in this vein, but number ten is a good traditional number to stop at. "The Jewish School" discusses the organization of the school, the curriculum, theory and method, manual work, the role of the child and other topics, but reference will be made to only one additional point. Because of the underlying philosophy of Jewish life, because of the stress on two books, and because of the role of the memory in the educational process, Jewish education, like all classical education, was concerned with the preservation of that *which is* rather than with striving for that *which may be.* "It aimed to perpetuate a system of life the fundamentals of which were supposed to have been fixed for all time. The task of the school consisted in the transmission of the literature in which that system of life was embodied."

The aim of Jewish education today should not be to transmit a fixed literature or a fixed way of life. The Jewish school should aid in making Jewish children creative participants in Jewish life and in making Jewish life and Jewish education over in the light of their emerging ideals and purposes. The Jewish school should give the Jewish child not only a glimpse of the Jewish life that was, but also of the Jewish life that is and *that may be.*